

WASHINGTON – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) announced today that the La Plata and Indian Head Volunteer Fire Departments have been awarded federal Fire Grants totaling \$185,958 through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The La Plata Volunteer Fire Department received a grant in the amount of \$125,208 and the Indian Head Volunteer Fire Department received a grant in the amount of \$60,750. As co-chair of the Congressional Fire Caucus, Congressman Hoyer was very active in helping establish and fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, which helps local fire departments in Maryland and across the country buy equipment and provide adequate training.

“The residents of Southern Maryland will truly benefit from this fire grant that will help these two departments update their equipment, and equally important, help keep our firefighters and EMS personnel safe when they do their job,” said Congressman Hoyer. “Our volunteer and career firefighters sacrifice a great deal to protect our communities and it is our duty to provide them with all available resources they need to protect our neighborhoods from harm and to ensure that they are able to safely perform their job.”

“I am pleased that these two Charles County Volunteer Fire Departments are the recipients of grants that will allow them to replace old, worn protective gear and purchase life-saving equipment,” Hoyer added. “With this funding, these departments will be able to better serve their communities and allow their firefighters to work safely and efficiently.”

The La Plata VFD was awarded a federal Fire Grant in the amount of \$125,208 under the program area of Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety. The grant will be used to purchase 15 new sets of turnout gear, new vehicle extrication equipment and some replacement fire hoses and nozzles.

La Plata VFD Treasurer Lynn Gilroy said, “This grant will allow us to ensure our firefighters are protected with the latest and most advanced personal protective gear when responding to a fire call. We will also now be equipped with the latest technology to assist in extricating individuals from motor vehicle accidents in La Plata and the surrounding area.”

The Indian Head VFD and Rescue Squad was awarded a federal Fire Grant in the amount of \$60,750 under the program area of Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety. The grant will be used to replace turnout gear allowing 100% of their firefighters to have proper protection in execution of firefighting and other public service duties. The department will also be able to purchase a cardiac monitor to replace their current monitor and AEDs for their fire truck and two

utility vehicles.

Bill Deer, Assistant Chief for EMS said, "Congressman Hoyer has done a lot of legwork to keep the federal Fire Grant program funded. Although we get budget money from the County, with the skyrocketing cost of equipment, we have to spend a lot of time fundraising. This Grant Program is vital for smaller departments who simply could not afford some of the critical equipment we need to do our jobs and protect our members."

Congressman Hoyer helped start the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program because fire departments often have difficulty purchasing proper equipment. A ladder truck for a local fire department can run upwards of \$750,000 and outfitting one firefighter with turnout gear and breathing apparatus can approach \$4,500. In addition, departments must fund training programs for paid and/or volunteer firefighters.

The program funding can be used for the following: turnout gear; breathing apparatus; communications equipment; wellness and fitness programs; computer and technology improvements for record keeping and training purposes; training in fire-fighting, emergency response and arson prevention; improving the enforcement of fire codes; and modifying fire stations and fire training facilities to protect the health and safety of the firefighter personnel.

President Bush's budget blueprint for fiscal year 2002 eliminated funding for the Firefighter program, contending that the fire grant program "does not represent an appropriate responsibility of the federal government." Congressman Hoyer and other members of Congress have historically fought to restore funding to the program, and secured \$650 million in fiscal year 2005, \$150 million more than the President's request for 2005. However, the President's budget for fiscal year 2006 proposed another \$150 million decrease in funds for the program and Congressman Hoyer will fight to restore these funds as the House of Representatives considers the FY06 Homeland Security Appropriations bill later this year.

The President's budget also eliminates funding for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters (SAFER) Grant Program. Last year, Congressman Hoyer was successful in securing \$65 million in funding for the SAFER Program in the Homeland Security funding bill and he will continue to be a leader in fighting for funding for this program. Funding for this historic new federal grant program will help career and volunteer fire departments hire new firefighters, recruit and retain volunteer fire fighters, and provide relief to the thousands of local fire stations across the country that are currently operating short of staff.

Since 2001, Maryland has received nearly \$22 million in grant funding from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. Fire departments that have received grants in Maryland's Fifth District include La Plata, Hughesville, Mechanicsville, Solomons, Laurel, Prince George's County, Seventh District, Leonardtown, College Park, Cobb Island, Second District, Brandywine, Greenbelt, Benedict, Waldorf, Newburg, Berwyn Heights, Potomac Heights, Bryans Road, and Prince Frederick.

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